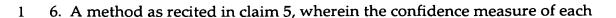
CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method of identifying one or more items from amongst a plurality of items in
- 2 response to a spoken utterance, the method comprising:
- 3 using an automatic speech recognizer to recognize the utterance, including
- 4 generating a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance; and
- 5 generating a query element based on the utterance, for use in identifying one
- 6 or more items from amongst the plurality of items, such that the query element
- 7 includes values representing two or more hypotheses of the plurality of hypotheses.
- 2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the query element includes values
- 2 representing a best hypothesis and a hypothesis other than the best hypothesis from
- 3 the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 3. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the query element includes values
- 2 representing all of the plurality of hypotheses.
- 4. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the query element is a vector.
- 5. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein each of the hypotheses includes one or
- 2 more words, wherein the query element includes a set of values, each value
- 3 corresponding to one of said words, and wherein the method further comprises
- 4 weighting each of the values in the query element based on a confidence measure of
- 5 the hypothesis that includes the word corresponding to said value.



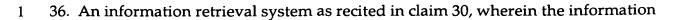
- 2 hypothesis is based on a rank of said hypothesis among the plurality of hypotheses.
- 7. A method as recited in claim 5, wherein the method further comprises weighting
- 2 each of the values in the query element based on a confidence measure of the word
- 3 corresponding to said value.
- 8. A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising applying the query element to
- 2 the plurality of items to identify one or more items from amongst the plurality of
- 3 items.
- 9. A method as recited in claim 8, wherein each of the items is a destination in a call
- 2 routing system.
- 1 10. A method as recited in claim 9, wherein each of the items is a dataset in an
- 2 information retrieval system.
- 1 11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of items are items of text
- 2 data.
- 1 12. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the plurality of items are items of audio
- 2 data.
- 1 13. A method of identifying one or more items from amongst a plurality of items in
- 2 response to a spoken utterance, the method comprising:
- 3 using an automatic speech recognizer to recognize the utterance, including
- 4 generating a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance, wherein each of the

- 5 hypotheses includes one or more words;
- 6 generating a query element for use in identifying one or more items from
- 7 amongst the plurality of items, wherein the query element includes a set of values
- 8 representing all of the plurality of hypotheses, each value corresponding to one of
- 9 said words; and
- weighting each of the values in the query element based on a confidence
- measure of the hypothesis that includes the word corresponding to said value,
- wherein the confidence measure of each hypothesis is based on a rank of the
- 13 hypothesis among the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 14. A method as recited in claim 13, further comprising weighting each of the values
- 2 in the query element based on a confidence measure of the word corresponding to
- 3 said value.
- 1 15. A method as recited in claim 13, further comprising applying the query element
- 2 to the plurality of items to identify one or more items from amongst the plurality of
- 3 items.
- 1 16. A method as recited in claim 15, wherein each of the items is a destination in a
- 2 call routing system.
- 1 17. A method as recited in claim 15, wherein each of the items is a dataset in a
- 2 database in an information retrieval system.
- 1 18. A method as recited in claim 13, wherein the plurality of items are items of text
- 2 data.

- 1 19. A method as recited in claim 13, wherein the plurality of items are items of audio
- 2 data.
- 20. An apparatus for identifying one or more items from amongst a plurality of
- 2 items in response to a spoken utterance, the apparatus comprising:
- means for using an automatic speech recognizer to recognize the utterance,
- 4 including generating a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance; and
- 5 means for generating a set of values representing a query, for use in
- 6 identifying one or more items from amongst the plurality of items, the set of values
- 7 including values representing a best hypothesis and a hypothesis other than the best
- 8 hypothesis from the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 21. An apparatus as recited in claim 20, wherein the set of values includes values
- 2 representing all of the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 22. An apparatus as recited in claim 20, wherein each of the hypotheses includes one
- 2 or more words, wherein each value of the set of values corresponds to one of said
- words, and wherein the apparatus further comprises means for weighting each of
- 4 the values based on a confidence measure of the hypothesis that includes the word
- 5 corresponding to said value.
- 1 23. An apparatus as recited in claim 22, wherein the confidence measure of each
- 2 hypothesis is based on a rank of the hypothesis among the plurality of hypotheses.

- 1 24. An apparatus as recited in claim 22, wherein the apparatus further comprises
- 2 means for weighting each of the values in the set of values based on a confidence
- 3 measure of the word corresponding to said value.
- 25. An apparatus as recited in claim 20, further comprising means for applying the
- 2 set of values to the plurality of items to identify one or more items from amongst the
- 3 plurality of items.
- 1 26. An apparatus as recited in claim 25, wherein the apparatus is part of a call
- 2 routing system, such that each of the plurality of items is a call destination.
- 27. An apparatus as recited in claim 25, wherein the apparatus is part of an
- 2 information retrieval system, such that each of the plurality of items is a dataset in a
- 3 database of the information retrieval system.
- 1 28. An apparatus as recited in claim 20, wherein the plurality of items are items of
- 2 text data.
- 1 29. An apparatus as recited in claim 20, wherein the plurality of items are items of
- 2 audio data.
- 1 30. An information retrieval system comprising:
- 2 a database;
- an information retrieval engine to identify and retrieve one or more items
- 4 from the database which satisfy a text-based query; and
- an automatic speech recognizer to generate the query in response to an

- 6 utterance of a user, the automatic speech recognizer configured to:
- 7 generate a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance; and
- 8 generate a query element representing the query, the query element
- 9 including values representing two or more hypotheses of the plurality of
- 10 hypotheses.
- 1 31. An information retrieval system as recited in claim 30, wherein the query
- 2 element includes values representing all of the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 32. An information retrieval system as recited in claim 31, wherein each of the
- 2 hypotheses includes one or more words, wherein each value in the query element
- 3 corresponds to one of said words, and wherein the method further comprises
- 4 weighting each of the values in the query element based on a confidence measure of
- 5 the hypothesis that includes the corresponding word.
- 1 33. An information retrieval system as recited in claim 32, wherein the confidence
- 2 measure of each hypothesis is based on a rank of the hypothesis among the plurality
- 3 of hypotheses.
- 1 34. An information retrieval system as recited in claim 32, wherein the automatic
- 2 speech recognizer is further configured to weight each of the values in the query
- 3 element based on a confidence measure of the word corresponding to said value.
- 1 35. An information retrieval system as recited in claim 30, wherein the information
- 2 retrieval engine uses the query to retrieve text data satisfying the query from the
- 3 database.



- 2 retrieval engine uses the query to retrieve audio data satisfying the query from the
- 3 database.
- 1 37. A call routing system comprising:
- 2 a database;
- a call routing engine to identify and provide a caller with access to a call
- 4 destination which satisfies a text-based query; and
- an automatic speech recognizer to generate the query in response to an
- 6 utterance of the caller, the automatic speech recognizer configured to:
- 7 generate a plurality of hypotheses for the utterance; and
- generate a query element representing the query, the query element
- 9 including values representing two or more hypotheses of the plurality of
- 10 hypotheses.
- 1 38. A call routing system as recited in claim 37, wherein the query element includes
- 2 values representing all of the plurality of hypotheses.
- 1 39. A call routing system as recited in claim 38, wherein each of the hypotheses
- 2 includes one or more words, wherein each value in the query element corresponds
- 3 to one of said words, and wherein the method further comprises weighting each of
- 4 the values in the query element based on a confidence measure of the hypothesis
- 5 that includes the corresponding word.

- 1 40. A call routing system as recited in claim 39, wherein the confidence measure of
- 2 each hypothesis is based on a rank of the hypothesis among the plurality of
- 3 hypotheses.
- 1 41. A call routing system as recited in claim 39, wherein the automatic speech
- 2 recognizer is further configured to weight each of the values in the query element
- 3 based on a confidence measure of the word corresponding to said value.
- 1 42. A call routing system as recited in claim 37, wherein the information retrieval
- 2 engine uses the query to retrieve text data satisfying the query from the database.
- 1 43. A call routing system as recited in claim 37, wherein the information retrieval
- 2 engine uses the query to retrieve audio data satisfying the query from the database.